

## A Miracle In Camouflage

**F**OR 10 years Anita Marroquin prayed for a miracle from God, but she never imagined a U.S. soldier in BDUs would appear as the responding angel.

Marroquin, who's from the city of Berlin, in El Salvador, got a visit from CPT Conrad Hawkins, an Army Reserve physical therapist, in February 2002, when he was participating in exercise New Horizons 2002 with the 330th Combat Support Hospital from Millington, Tenn.

New Horizons is a humanitarian-aid and civic-action exercise conducted annually in Central and South America. Hawkins and his unit were providing local medical care near Berlin when he met Marroquin.

"We were distributing medications and performing basic physical exams to identify any medical problems the villagers might have had, so they could seek follow-up," Hawkins said.

Marroquin visited the unit as it was providing this assistance. She presented a letter to COL Howard Bromley, the unit commander, seeking his help in obtaining a prosthetic arm.

"He came to me, the unit's physical therapist, and asked if I thought this request was possible," Hawkins said. "I told him I believed I could make it happen, because I had contacts in the States who deal primarily with prostheses."

"The next day we contacted Miss Marroquin, and I took measurements of her left arm. It was a bit ironic, because initially I wasn't supposed to be a part of the mission; no one had anticipated a need for physical therapists, but I was adamant about coming, and I'm glad I did."

Hawkins said that during the measur-

ing process he realized he didn't have all the materials he needed to do the job correctly. "We needed to make a plaster mold of her right shoulder. Her arm, up to her shoulder, had been amputated after an auto accident that occurred during the El Salvador civil war," he said.

Hawkins said the prosthetic arm she received after the accident was made of wood and metal and weighed almost 80 pounds.

"For a woman who weighs only 140 pounds, that was way too heavy," he said.

Hawkins returned to the States with the measurements and contacted several companies he thought might be able to help him. One contact was Ted Snell, manager of CFI Inc., a company that manufactures prostheses.

Snell initially said he would produce the arm free of charge but needed the plaster mold Hawkins had been unable to make.

Fortunately, on the last rotation of the exercise, another soldier took the materials needed to make the cast and met with Marroquin to complete the job.

Hawkins picked up the casting when it was flown back to the States and gave it, along with the measurements he had taken, to CFI.

The story could have ended there, because the manufacturer no longer agreed to cover the cost of the prosthesis. But Hawkins didn't give up.

He bargained with the company, which agreed not to charge for labor, if he could pay for parts.

Hawkins solicited funds from his unit, and the response was overwhelming. The soldiers raised almost \$600.

"Finally in November 2002, I picked up the prosthetic arm and Army Reserve officials sent me back to El Salvador to fit Anita with the arm and to provide any needed physical therapy," Hawkins said.

Marroquin said, after 10 years God had finally answered her prayers to receive an American prosthetic arm that was lightweight and that she could wear. As Hawkins began to fit the life-like arm to Marroquin, she couldn't stop smiling, and tears of joy streamed down her face.

"This arm will really help me, especially with my job. I work at a post office, and I have to write a lot, so to be able to have something to keep the papers from moving and to keep myself propped up will be a big help. This is truly something that is going to make my life better," Marroquin said. 🇺🇸

